



2024 Sustainability Review

Sustainability is really important to us and we want to do everything we can to reduce our environmental impact.

The effect of global warming is becoming increasingly more evident and for the first time in our 20 year history, we had to offer park and ride for two of our events because of waterlogged parking fields. That's fairly inconsequential compared to the risks to future generations, and to the amazing locations in which we're lucky to go trail running.

The biggest impact of our events comes from our runners themselves so whilst it's important that we do our bit, it's also important that we inform our runners and offer them choices.

We don't profess to doing everything we can but we're continuing to make changes for the better and we don't always implement things straight away because it's easy to get distracted by 'green washing'. A good example of this offering 'compostable' cups which typically only compost in industrial composters – who has access to one of those?

Travel

Wherever possible, we use local suppliers for our events – our caterers, marquee and services providers are all small Cumbrian companies.

This year, we have had a significant reduction in transport costs for our t-shirts, which are now printed near Coniston – less than 3 miles from our Hawkshead event and less than 2 miles from our Coniston event.

We have reviewed the location of our storage sites, combining two and re-locating to a more central location and saving up to 50 miles travelling per return journey.

We have invested in a second hand EV for our Race Director. Why 'invested'? The initial purchase costs of EVs compared to fossil-fuelled cars is significant. However, their running costs are much less, with cheaper servicing and charging costs of only 2p per mile using a flexible tariff. We calculate the CO2 saving from this is 2880 kg per year.

Competitor travel to events causes our largest environmental impact. Whilst we'd all love to use public transport, simple things like unreliable train services and disjointed bus timetables can make this a little tricky.

To incentivise runners, we offer free car parking if there are 4 runners in a car (at events where we manage the car park) and runners who travel by public transport go into a prize draw to win a free entry. On top of that, there's a Facebook group for those looking to car share to the events. The most notable offer there came from Damian Hall, one of Britain's leading trail runners and co-founder of The Green Runners, a community making changes for a fitter planet.

Pensions

We have reviewed our pension provisions for employees and ensure that the portfolios are sustainability-based and avoid companies which have a negative impact on the environment. Lots of big energy companies are investing heavily in renewable tech. However, this still dwarfs the amount of money they invest in exploiting areas such as the Arctic and rainforests for new sources of gas and oil.

T-Shirts and Merchandise

Only a few years ago, we used to order around 11,500 'free' event t-shirts each year. They had great designs so that people would want to wear them (as they still do) but with many people taking part in multiple events per year, many t-shirts would be left in bulging cupboards, only to be worn a few times, if at all.

In 2021, we launched our own version of Trees not Tees, BiodiversiTee, giving runners the option to donate the cost of their t-shirt to Cumbria Wildlife Trust and in 2023 ordered 'just' 5400 tees. The cost of living crisis that year meant race entries were lower, it was, however, a huge saving. But we still had too many wasted tees.

This year, by separating the cost of the event t-shirt from the entry fee, we ordered 2100 fewer tees than last year – 9400 fewer than 2019! That's a huge saving!

We have also sourced a range of sustainably produced 100% organic cotton t-shirts and hoodies which are now available to buy. The garments support the circular economy – they include a QR code on a label and once the items have been worn that one final time, they can be returned to the UK-based manufacturer for a discount on a new purchase. We have phased out our polycotton hoodies too.

Race Bibs

It's often taken for granted that your race bib has a timing chip attached to it (they're quite a clever piece of kit, being energised by radio waves) along with a foam backing.

Our timing system is German and for every event, we used to order race bibs plus spares from Germany – around 13,250 in 2019. In some cases, bad weather would mean a turnout of only 60% of competitors using their bib. A huge waste.

We bought our first chip-generating machine last year and after a successful trial, programming the chips and attaching them on the living floor, we invested in 3 more machines this year.

In a very efficient process, when runners register, their bib number is scanned and the chip programmed.

Based on the savings this year, we expect to produce around 3500 fewer timing chips next year. We've also had contact from a different event company asking us about the kit so they can follow our steps.

Generators

Through the event day, you become accustomed to drone of the generators we use to power our systems and gantry. It's noticeable when the final one is turned off and peace returns.

In our mission to reduce the amount of fossil fuel we use, we invested in a large battery pack which has been successfully trialled and now silently powers our remote safety mast.

Waste

We significantly reduced our waste by removing single use cups from water stations entirely (claiming that cups are 'recyclable' is often greenwashing as they need industrial composters).

Our pizza caterer is very popular at the events which was leading to a large amount of cardboard waste (grease on cardboard boxes means they can't be recycled) so we asked them to do some research and they now offer pizzas on recyclable plates.

What next?

We're aiming to remove the need for fossil fuel-powered generators next year and have already invested in a second battery pack with a solar panel (hopefully we'll get a few more sunny event days).

The two biggest power-consumers are our gantry fan and PA system. We're looking to invest in a new metal gantry, in part for the energy saving, but also for more resilience as we experience stronger winds with climate change.

We'll also be investing in new battery powered speakers.

Dealing with recyclable waste is always something which has been harder than it should be – partly because some people naturally take the easy option and find the nearest bin, but also because we've not found a suitable way of recycling anything which we collect (with the exception of cardboard). We'll be engaging with the local council over the winter to look for a solution to that.

We've already found out how we can recycle race bibs, which are made from a type of plastic.

We also want to improve connectivity of the events to public transport and are exploring how shuttle buses could be used for that as well as engaging with the local councils to improve connectivity.

Despite our huge reduction in t-shirts produced, we want to do more and will be offering cotton event tees for all events.

We're not perfect and we can always be doing more, but we're pleased that we are making a difference!

Phil Blaylock

Director

12/12/24